

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

Division of Drug Marketing, Advertising, and Communications

National Surveys of Prescription Medicine Information Received by Consumers

National telephone surveys were conducted in 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998 to determine how much prescription medicine information consumers receive and through which sources. Approximately 1,000 U.S. consumers who received a new prescription for themselves or a family member at a retail pharmacy during the previous month participated in each survey. The consumers were asked whether they received oral counseling, at their physician's office and at their pharmacy, for five information categories. The consumers were also asked whether they received any written information at each location. If they did, the consumers were asked what type of written information they received.

Oral Information Results Chart, 1992-1998

Patients Who Asked for Information, 1992-1998

Written Information Results Chart, 1992-1998

For orally provided prescription medicine information, the percentage of consumers who were counseled about at least one category of information has increased over the past six years, although slowly. Consumers were told primarily about directions for use (how much to take and how often to take). In 1998, 24% of people were given both directions for use and risk information (precautions and side effects) at the doctor's office, and 14% of people were told both directions and risk information at the pharmacy.

A sub-analysis of the types of written information consumers received with prescription medicine showed that in 1998, 70% of Americans received written information that was longer than a brief sticker on the medicine container. This figure compares with 67% in 1996, 54% in 1994, and 24% in 1992. These percentages do not reflect the quality or usefulness of the information. A survey is currently underway to collect patient information materials consumers are being given for selected prescription medicines and to systematically evaluate the patient information content.

The Future

Increasing the percentage of patients who receive both oral and written prescription medicine information has been included in draft objectives being developed for Healthy People 2010, Chapter 17, Medical Product Safety.

Objective #6: Increase to 95 percent the proportion of patients receiving, at the time their new prescriptions are dispensed, written information that conforms to the Action Plan for the Provision of Prescription Medicine Information.

Objective #7: Increase to 95% the proportion of patients receiving from prescribers, pharmacists, and other health professionals oral counseling information that conveys directions for use and risk information (precautions and warnings).



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Percent of Patients Told Selected Medicine Information at the Physician's Office / Pharmacy

	Physician's Office					Pharmacy			
YEAR	1992	1994	1996	1998		1992	1994	1996	1998
How much to take	55	59	61	63		28	32	36	34
How often to take	56	61	62	65		27	33	37	34
Refills	32	35	34	33		16	15	19	15
Precautions	33	35	37	37		18	25	26	24
Side Effects	29	33	37	35		11	19	23	23
Any Information ¹	61	65	67	69		37	42	47	43
All Information ²	n/a	n/a	26	24		n/a	n/a	14	14

¹Any information = how much to take *or* how often to take *or*
whether medicine can be refilled *or* precautions *or* side effects

²All information = how much to take *and* how often to take *and* precautions *and* side effects
(does not include whether medicine can be refilled)

Percent of Patients Who Asked for Information at the Physician's Office / Pharmacy

	Physician's Office					Pharmacy			
Type of Information	1992	1994	1996	1998		1992	1994	1996	1998
How much to take	2	2	1	1		6	3	4	3
How often to take	2	1	2	1		5	3	4	3
Refills	5	2	4	3		6	3	4	3
Precautions	5	4	4	2		7	3	5	3
Side Effects	6	4	4	5		7	4	5	3

Percent of Patients Who Were Given Written Information at the Physician's Office / Pharmacy*

		Physician's Office				Pharmacy			
YEAR		1992	1994	1996	1998	1992	1994	1996	1998
% of All Respondents Given Written Information		14	15	16	16	32	59	71	74
% Type of Information Received (of those who got written information)	Brochures	45	49	50	57	33	28	29	38
	Instruction Sheets	77	71	66	78	60	82	85	85
	Stickers on medicine container	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	74	78	78	83

*These percentages do not reflect the quality or "usefulness" of the information, as no content analyses were performed.